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Illegal Israeli actions in Occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory

Security Council
Seventieth year

Identical letters dated 25 February 2015 from the Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General, the President of the General-Assembly and the President of the Security Council

The situation of the Palestinian civilian population under Israeli occupation remains critical owing to innumerable policies and practices being perpetrated by Israel, the occupying Power, in systematic, gross violation of international law, including, inter alia, the laws specifically intended to protect civilians in situations of armed conflict, including foreign occupation.

The right to life of Palestinian civilians — children, women and men — is under constant threat due to the excessive, indiscriminate force routinely used by the Israeli occupying forces and acts of violence and terror committed by Israeli settlers. Such brutality at the hands of the occupation, along with other measures of intimidation and provocation, continue to wilfully cause death and bodily harm and injury to Palestinian civilians, including permanent disabilities for thousands of people.

Today, we remember the appalling massacre committed by an Israeli settler against Palestinian worshippers in Al-Ibrahimi Mosque in At-Khalil on 25 February 1994 during the holy month of Ramadan. This heinous massacre was strongly condemned by the Security Council and led to the adoption of resolution 904 (1994) which called for "... measures to be taken to guarantee the safety and protection of the Palestinian civilians throughout the occupied territory, including inter alia, a temporary international or foreign presence, ...".

Twenty-one years later the Palestinian people continue to suffer. Yesterday, 24 February 2015, a young Palestinian lost his life to the senseless brutality of the Israeli occupying forces. Nineteen year-old Jihad Shehadeh Al-Jaafari was shot and killed during a pre-dawn military raid by the occupying forces in the Dheisheh refugee camp in Bethlehem. Reports indicate that he was shot directly by Israeli sniper fire while on the rooftop of his home. Such violent Israeli raids are carried out on a daily basis in the West Bank, including in and around Occupied East

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Jerusalem, with hundreds of raids per month causing dozens of Palestinian casualties, resulting in particular from the use of live ammunition against our defenceless civilian population in their homes, in peaceful demonstrations and in the streets of their neighbourhoods and communities.

Palestinian civilians also remain under constant threat of arrest, detention and abuse of their persons while in captivity; seizure and destruction of their property, including their homes, resulting in their forced dispossession and displacement; and obstruction and destruction of their livelihoods; as well as virulent racist attacks by extremists and institutionalized discrimination by the occupation.

I wish to highlight just a few examples of the many recent attacks, particularly by Israeli settlers, who continue to be emboldened by the occupying Power's illegal and rabid settlement colonization campaign throughout Occupied Palestine. This includes the recent wounding of two Palestinians, a 10-year-old girl, Mariam Kareem Dana, in the Silwan neighbourhood of Occupied East Jerusalem, and a 21-year-old man, Hassan Abdelrahman Badran, in Al-Khalil area, in settler attacks. Both were targeted by settlers using vehicles as a weapon to run over civilians, a repeated crime for which there is no accountability, even in incidents causing death, as in the killing of a 5-year-old Palestinian girl, Inas Khalil, in October 2014, by a settler. Also, on 21 February, Israeli settlers attacked and stabbed a 10-year-old Palestinian boy while he was playing in the snow in the Tel Rumeida area of Al-Khalil. Israeli settlers also continue to carry out near daily attacks against Palestinian farmers and shepherds and to uproot and burn olive trees and entire groves, undermining the livelihoods and sustenance of hundreds of Palestinian families.

Also, today, extremist Israeli settlers again set fire to a mosque, this time Al-Huda Mosque in the Palestinian village of Jaba'a south of Bethlehem. The fire, set in the early dawn hours, caused extensive damage to the mosque, in addition to settler vandalism of its walls with graffiti calling for the killing of Arabs and Muslims. These hateful, violent actions continue to be committed by Israeli settlers with impunity and threaten to ignite a dangerous religious confrontation. We thus again draw the international community's attention to the escalation of religious tensions due to such Israeli provocations and incitement against Palestinian Muslim and Christian communities and holy sites, including Al-Aqsa Mosque in Occupied East Jerusalem, which also continues to be subjected to provocations and incursions by Israeli extremists, and the potentially grave and manifold consequences of such reckless aggravation of this already volatile situation.

At the same time, the entire Palestinian civilian population under Israel's occupation suffers from continuous and multiple human rights violations resulting from the measures of collective punishment imposed by the occupying Power, most oppressively and inhumanely in the form of the illegal blockade of the Gaza Strip, which has caused the isolation and deprivation of the entire population, severely impacting their well-being. The disastrous humanitarian situation and consequent precarious security situation in the Gaza Strip have been well documented by the United Nations agencies on the ground, including the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and has been repeatedly brought to the attention of the Security Council by the United Nations Special Coordinator, Mr. Robert Serry, in his briefings, yet to no avail.

Regrettably, there has been little relief for the Palestinian people as the illegal Israeli blockade of Gaza continues and reconstruction of the thousands of homes and other civilian infrastructure destroyed in the criminal Israeli aggression of July-August 2014 continues to be obstructed. The massive destruction caused by the occupying forces has left more than 100,000 people without adequate housing and shelter, grossly violating this human right. This has resulted, inter alia, in the exposure of civilians to extreme weather conditions, including flooding and freezing cold, which have caused death and illness, especially affecting children, causing further distress and despair for an already traumatized people. Moreover, electricity cuts of up to 18 hours a day and lack of access to an adequate water supply, both exacerbated as a result of the combined impact of the blockade and the Israeli aggression, continue to negatively affect all aspects of daily life and to intensify the frustrations and distress of the population.

The cumulative result of these ongoing illegal Israeli policies and actions is the deepening of the protection crisis being endured by the Palestinian civilian population. While international humanitarian law, specifically as codified in the Fourth Geneva Convention, stipulates the responsibility of the occupying Power for the protection of the civilian population under its occupation, Israel is instead launching daily assaults on the Palestinian civilian population. Rather than ensuring the safety and well-being of the civilian population under its occupation, Israel is violating this and many other obligations defined in the core human rights covenants with impunity and with grave impact on the Palestinian people.

We thus reiterate our appeals for the protection of the Palestinian people in accordance with the relevant provisions of international law and we recall the appeals made in this regard in specific by President Mahmoud Abbas. The pledges and commitments made by the international community, inter alia, in the context of the Security Council's efforts to address the protection of civilian persons in armed conflict as well as the declarations by the High Contracting Parties to the Fourth Geneva Convention to honour their obligation to respect and ensure respect of the Convention in all circumstances, must be upheld, including vis-à-vis the situation in the Occupied State of Palestine. Measures must be undertaken, in accordance with international law, including humanitarian and human rights law, and the relevant United Nations resolutions, to compel Israel to cease its violations and to respect its legal obligations. This is imperative for alleviating the suffering of the Palestinian people under this nearly half-century Israeli military occupation, as well as for diffusing the volatile situation on the ground and for salvaging the prospects for peace, which have been so severely battered by Israel's criminal behaviour and intransigence.

In this regard, before concluding, I must again also draw attention to the extremely negative impact of Israel's illegal withholding of Palestinian tax revenues on the Palestinian people and their Government. This illegal measure, undertaken deliberately and punitively in retribution for legitimate, peaceful and non-violent efforts by the Palestinian leadership to protect and advance the rights of the Palestinian people, continues to seriously harm the functioning of the Palestinian national institutions and services, including in the fields of health, education, law and order, and is having a detrimental impact on the well-being of our people. We therefore reiterate our call on the international community, to demand and to act to compel Israel, the occupying Power, to immediately release Palestinian funds and to cease all punitive measures and illegal actions against the Palestinian people and to

comply forthwith with all of its obligations under international law and to show in word and deed that it is committed to the path of peace that we have been long committed to.

The present letter is in follow-up to our 537 letters regarding the ongoing crisis in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, which constitutes the State of Palestine. These letters, dated from 29 September 2000 (A/55/432-S/2000/921) to 12 February 2015 (A/ES-10/673-S/2015/109), constitute a basic record of the crimes being committed against the Palestinian people. Israel, the occupying Power, must be held accountable and the perpetrators must be brought to justice.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of the present letter distributed as a document of the tenth emergency special session of the General Assembly, under agenda item 5, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Riyad **Mansour**
Ambassador
Permanent Observer of the State of Palestine
to the United Nations